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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 2nd meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 5 October 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)
 later: Mr. Petkus (Vice-Chairperson) (Lithuania)
 later: Mr. Al-Nasser (Chairperson) (Qatar)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.

Agenda item 35: Information from Non-Self-Governing Territories transmitted under Article 73 e of the Charter of the United Nations (A/64/23 and Corr.2, chaps. VII and XII, and A/64/67)

Agenda item 36: Economic and other activities which affect the interests of the peoples of the Non-Self-Governing Territories (A/64/23 and Corr.2, chaps. V and XII)

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Agenda item 39: Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (*Territories not covered under other items*) (A/64/23 and Corr.1 and 2, chaps. VIII, IX, X, XI and Corr.1 (in Spanish only) and XII, A/64/70 and A/64/185)

1. **Mr. Natalegawa** (Indonesia), speaking as Chairman of the Special Committee on the Situation with regard to the Implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, and assessing the status of decolonization as the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism drew to a close, said that since the establishment of the United Nations, nearly 750 million people had exercised their right to self-determination, and more than 80 once-colonized Territories had gained independence and become proud members of the Organization. Yet decolonization remained part of the unfinished business of the United Nations, for there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories. The task now was to accelerate their decolonization, and to do so in the context of a changing world, on a case-by-case basis. In some of them, the process of decolonization was already in place; others might in the future be prepared to start the necessary constitutional steps towards a change of status; and in at least one case there had been setbacks. Progress still required the commitment of the entire membership of the United Nations and a collaborative effort by the

international community, the administering Powers and the Territories themselves.

2. The Special Committee's aim was to give all stakeholders a better understanding of the intricacies of conditions on the ground and contemporary dependency dynamics; and it had thus become more engaged in genuine dialogue with all those involved. Having scrutinized its own performance, it had utilized its formal meetings more effectively and had sought to produce action-oriented, up-to-date recommendations on the basis of its monitoring of last-minute developments in a given Territory. It had revamped the format of its annual regional seminars on decolonization so as to focus on a number of cross-cutting issues in the contemporary process of decolonization. Pertinent observations by members of the Special Committee who had attended the 2009 regional seminar in Saint Kitts and Nevis could be found in the annex to chapter II of the Special Committee's report (A/64/23).

3. Just as the Special Committee had taken steps to improve the way it conducted its work, it invited all its partners and all stakeholders in the process of decolonization to do likewise. There was room for improvement in the cooperation by some of the administering Powers with the Special Committee; close cooperation, as exemplified by New Zealand in the case of Tokelau, benefited all concerned and especially the people of the Territories.

4. Education and public outreach remained crucial if the people were to make an informed decision regarding their future political status. Part of the targeted development support for the Territories provided by the United Nations family of agencies, funds and programmes should be the enhancement of the capacity for self-government, as well as assistance in economic and social development, environmental sustainability, health care and good governance. The Special Committee itself had benefited from the input of the various Secretariat departments involved. It would continue to seek guidance from the international community on the future course of action in the process of decolonization.

5. **Mr. Ja'afari** (Syrian Arab Republic), speaking as Rapporteur of the Special Committee on Decolonization, introduced the report of the Special Committee (A/64/23 and Corr.2). It reviewed various aspects of the Special Committee's activities during 2009 and its plans for future work; gave an account of the 2009 Caribbean

regional seminar held in Saint Kitts and Nevis; focussed on specific themes in chapters II to VI and on individual situations in Territories in chapters VIII to XI; concluding in chapter XII with its recommendations to the General Assembly regarding the Territories in a series of draft resolutions. He pointed out that new developments in Saint Helena and the Turks and Caicos Islands had necessitated revision (in A/64/23 and Corr.2) of the chapters in draft resolution XI dealing with those Territories.

6. **Mr. Abdelaziz** (Egypt), speaking on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement, for which decolonization and the exercise of the fundamental right to self-determination had always been high priorities, said that colonialism in any form, including economic exploitation, was incompatible with United Nations principles. It was therefore unfortunate that efforts were still needed to do away with it. Effective implementation of the Plan of Action adopted in 2000 for the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism would speed up the process.

7. The Non-Aligned Movement urged all administering Powers to pay full and fair compensation to the people of the Territories under their control for the economic, social and cultural consequences of their past or current occupation. At the same time, the United Nations must ensure that economic and other activities being carried out by the administering Powers of Non-Self-Governing Territories did not run counter to the interests of the people but instead promoted development and helped them make progress towards self-determination, while safeguarding their cultural identity and their heritage.

8. As a strong supporter of the work of the Special Committee, the Non-Aligned Movement urged administering Powers to cooperate with it and encouraged the Special Committee to continue to work towards full implementation of the Declaration on decolonization and of the relevant General Assembly resolutions.

9. The Movement's position on the question of Puerto Rico remained unchanged and had been outlined most recently at the 2009 Ministerial Meeting of its Coordinating Bureau held in Cuba and its Fifteenth Summit of Heads of State and Government held in Egypt later in the year.

10. *Mr. Petkus (Lithuania), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

11. **Mr. Cancela** (Uruguay), speaking on behalf of the countries of the Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) and its associated States, reiterated their support for the legitimate rights of the Argentine Republic in the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands. The Presidents of the member States of MERCOSUR and its associated States had recently reaffirmed that support in a Joint Communiqué, adopted at a meeting of the Council of the Common Market. The Communiqué had also noted that the adoption of unilateral measures was incompatible with United Nations decisions, and that it was in the interests of the whole region for the prolonged sovereignty dispute to be resolved as soon as possible, in accordance with the resolutions of the General Assembly and the declarations of the Organization of American States (OAS), MERCOSUR and other regional and multilateral forums. The inclusion of the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands in the list of countries and territories covered by part four of the Treaty establishing the European Community, was incompatible with the existence of a sovereignty dispute.

12. Self-determination was the best way to achieve the decolonization of territories with peoples subjected to alien subjugation, domination and exploitation, as established in resolution 1514 (XV). However, self-determination and decolonization were not synonymous. It had been clearly established in many General Assembly and other resolutions that the principle of self-determination was not applicable to the question of the Malvinas Islands, which constituted a special and particular colonial situation involving a sovereignty dispute, between the Argentine Republic and the United Kingdom. Those resolutions had also repeatedly stated that the only way to find a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands was through the resumption of negotiations between Argentina and the United Kingdom.

13. MERCOSUR and its associated States recognized the willingness of the Argentine Republic to resume negotiations in order to achieve a rapid solution to the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas, and urged the United Kingdom to comply with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and other international bodies.

14. **Mr. Heller** (Mexico), speaking on behalf of the Rio Group, said it was important to ensure that all

peoples could exercise their inalienable right to self-determination. While the work of the United Nations had enabled many peoples to gain independence, the fact that there were still 16 Non-Self-Governing Territories on the United Nations list clearly showed that the decolonization process was not over. He reaffirmed the Rio Group's commitment to eradicating colonialism and called upon the administering Powers to adopt the necessary measures to achieve decolonization in all the remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories, taking into consideration the particular circumstances of each case. He also called upon the administering Powers to cooperate with the Committee and to transmit the information called for under Article 73 *e* of the Charter of the United Nations.

15. The Group supported the work of the Department of Public Information to disseminate information on the objectives of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, but urged it to redouble its efforts.

16. The Governments of Argentina and the United Kingdom must resume their negotiations in order to find a peaceful, just and definitive solution to the sovereignty dispute over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and the surrounding maritime areas, in accordance with the relevant resolutions and decisions of the General Assembly, the Special Committee and others, as soon as possible, bearing in mind the principle of territorial integrity.

17. Measures should continue to be taken to promote sustained economic growth in the small island Territories in the Caribbean and Pacific. Special attention should also be paid to the major problems affecting those Territories, including hurricanes and other natural disasters.

18. With regard to Western Sahara, the Rio Group reaffirmed its support for the relevant General Assembly and Security Council resolutions and continued to support the efforts of the Secretary-General to reach a fair, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution leading to self-determination for the people of Western Sahara. In that regard, the Group welcomed the recent initial informal preparatory meeting in Austria between the two parties to the dispute under the auspices of the Secretary-General pursuant to the final communiqué of the fourth round of the Manhasset talks, a meeting designed to foster more substantive negotiations in order to achieve a definitive solution through the implementation of

Security Council resolutions 1754 (2007), 1783 (2007), 1813 (2008) and 1871 (2009).

19. **Mr. Bart** (Saint Kitts and Nevis), speaking on behalf of the States members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), expressed deep concern over the fact that, while internal reforms had been enacted in several of the Non-Self-Governing Territories, very little progress had been made in actual decolonization, which entailed selecting one of the legitimate options for political status, namely, independence, free association or integration. The lack of progress seemed to indicate that decolonization had receded as a United Nations priority. The annual report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization, for example, had not made reference to decolonization for a number of years, and the first and only report on the implementation of decolonization (A/64/70) was very summary and incomplete.

20. Recalling the many concerns voiced over the years by CARICOM under the decolonization items, he said that, as the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism drew to a close, the main obstacle was still in its view the inability of the General Assembly to enforce its resolutions. Unless that state of inertia was broken, the world body would be complicit in stymieing the legitimate aspirations of peoples whose fullest human rights had been created to protect.

21. The United Nations must act as a consistent check-and-balance on the administering Powers of the dependent Territories. The current political vacuum had led to an attempt to redefine the non-self-governing status as self-government, the apparent aim being a hurried removal of the remaining dependent Territories from the United Nations list. The international community could not countenance such a position: verifiable attainment of a full measure of self-government, based on the long-standing United Nations criteria in the matter, was what determined whether a Territory was to be removed from United Nations oversight. The United Nations must restart the dormant decolonization process rather than capitulating to dubious arguments that gave political cover to the legitimization of contemporary colonialism and declared decolonization to be complete. Six of the dependent Territories whose peoples would thus be abandoned were in the Caribbean and were full or associate members of CARICOM and its institutions. The Organization's failure to act was thus impeding

regional integration. All the other CARICOM members and many of the other States now present had achieved decolonization through the active support and vigilance of the United Nations; unfortunately, since then such support had significantly declined.

22. The approach to decolonization needed to be fundamentally revamped; there was an urgent need for a special mechanism to conduct, for the first time, a comprehensive review of the implementation of the decolonization mandate that would present a full picture of the current state of affairs. The strategic framework for decolonization and the proposed programme budget for 2010-2011 should also be carefully revised with the aim of achieving real results. CARICOM was willing to work with interested delegations in modernizing the entire decolonization agenda, beginning with the simplification of the lengthy formal name of the Special Committee on decolonization and of agenda item 37 regarding assistance to the Territories by the United Nations system.

23. The political crisis in the Turks and Caicos Islands was deeply disquieting. The decision of the administering Power to replace the elected government with direct rule was a regrettable step backwards for a Territory that was an associate member of CARICOM. The democratic process could never be strengthened by removing representative democracy. The people of the Territory should have been involved through their elected representatives in the efforts needed to strengthen good governance. CARICOM agreed with the Non-Aligned Movement that it was urgent to restore constitutional government there.

24. CARICOM maintained its long-standing support for the self-determination of the people of Western Sahara, and took note of the consultations held by the Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General with the parties to the dispute, the neighbouring States and other interested countries in order to find ways of moving the negotiations forward. United Nations agencies were providing welcome humanitarian assistance, especially food aid, in the refugee camps in Western Sahara, yet malnutrition remained a major problem. What was needed was a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution, as called for in Security Council resolution 1871 (2009). The African Union had rightly called for an intensification of efforts to hold a referendum that would enable the people of the Territory to choose between the option of independence and that of integration into the Kingdom of Morocco.

25. **Mr. Liu Zhenmin** (China) said that although the Declaration had served to accelerate the process of decolonization across the world, two million people still lived in Non-Self-Governing Territories. It was incumbent upon Member States to help the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their inalienable right to self-determination in accordance with the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the Declaration. The Committee had considerable responsibilities and had made vigorous efforts to discharge them, including through the strengthening of its links with Non-Self-Governing Territories.

26. His delegation also looked forward to closer cooperation between the administering Powers and the United Nations. China had consistently supported the efforts of the people of Non-Self-Governing Territories to exercise their right to self-determination. It would continue to work with the Committee and other Member States to ensure that the goals set forth in the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism were achieved.

27. **Ms. Espinosa** (Ecuador), noting that the principles of territorial integrity, respect for the sovereignty of States and the peaceful settlement of disputes were not only fundamental pillars of her country's foreign policy, but also enshrined in its Constitution, expressed strong support for Argentina's legitimate sovereignty rights over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands, and the surrounding maritime areas. The General Assembly and the Special Committee had adopted various resolutions acknowledging that those islands had a special colonial situation that was unlike any others. She urged the United Kingdom to comply with the United Nations call for a just, peaceful and lasting solution to the sovereignty dispute.

28. She reaffirmed her delegation's support for General Assembly resolution 1514 (XV) concerning decolonization, in particular the principle of the expression by the Saharan people of their right to self-determination. Ecuador also supported the continuation of negotiations between the *Frente Popular para la Liberación de Saguia el-Hamra y de Río de Oro* (Frente Polisario) and the Government of Morocco.

29. The question of Puerto Rico should continue to be addressed, in accordance with the Special Committee's 2009 resolution reaffirming the island's inalienable right to self-determination and independence. She expressed the hope that the Committee's 16 remaining cases of

decolonization could be resolved before the end of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism in 2010. However, that could not be achieved without the commitment and cooperation of the entire international community.

30. **Mr. Parham** (United Kingdom) said that, where the people of one of the Overseas Territories administered by his Government had clearly and constitutionally opted for independence, it would help them to achieve it. Where instead the Territory wished to retain the link to the United Kingdom, it would safeguard that Territory's future development and continued security, working in partnership with its elected leaders in areas such as good governance, political and economic transparency, enhanced security and disaster mitigation, and holding regular annual political consultations with them.

31. The Territorial constitutions governed the relationship between the United Kingdom and its Overseas Territories, and his Government regularly updated them, carefully considering all proposals for constitutional change received from the Territories. New constitutions had come into force in the Turks and Caicos Islands and Gibraltar in 2006, in the British Virgin Islands in 2007 and in the Falkland Islands and St. Helena in 2009, and would do so the following month in the Cayman Islands.

32. Maintaining high standards of probity and governance was a cornerstone of British administration of the Territories. His Government was committed to allowing each Territory to run its own affairs responsibly as far as possible, but when developments in a Territory gave cause for concern or a Territory failed to fulfil international obligations, the United Kingdom would not hesitate to raise the matter with the Territorial government and intervene where necessary. That had been the case in the Turks and Caicos Islands: in 2008 an independent commission of inquiry looking into evidence of corruption or poor management by elected members of the Territory's legislature had reported dire financial mismanagement and made over 60 recommendations covering systemic weaknesses, criminal sanctions, public integrity and land allocation, sale and management. In August 2009, his Government had consequently instructed the Governor of the Turks and Caicos Islands to suspend the government and legislature and automatic right to trial by jury. The decision to do so had not been taken lightly. The suspension would last for a period of up to two years to

allow the Governor to restore good governance, sustainable development and sound financial management to the Islands while he worked under an interim constitution with an advisory council to formulate policy and a consultative forum to allow the people's voice to be heard. It remained Britain's intention that elections should be held in July 2011, if not sooner.

33. The British Government continued to encourage all its Overseas Territories to meet internationally recognized Group of Twenty (G-20) standards to ensure sound financial regulation and economic management. Thus far, three of the seven Overseas Territories with financial centres — Bermuda, the British Virgin Islands and the Cayman Islands — were now on the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) list of jurisdictions that had fully implemented internationally agreed tax standards. The United Kingdom was also working with the Territorial governments to ensure that their public finances could handle economic shocks and that their fiscal policy included a clear strategy for cutting levels of debt before they did any further borrowing.

34. **Mr. Valero Briceño** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) observed that there were still instances in the American hemisphere of Territories subject to colonial domination or occupation by foreign Powers. The work of the Special Committee was especially important in advancing the decolonization of the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories worldwide.

35. His Government firmly supported the self-determination of peoples, especially in the case of the Malvinas Islands, Puerto Rico and Western Sahara. It endorsed Argentina's legitimate sovereignty over the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and their surrounding maritime areas. It also supported the inalienable right of Puerto Rico to self-determination as a distinct Latin American and Caribbean nation. The Non-Aligned Movement at its 2009 summit had called upon the United States Government to encourage the Puerto Rican people to progress towards self-determination and independence. At the same time, the United States Government should return all occupied territory and installations built in Vieques and Ceiba to the people of Puerto Rico, and release political prisoners who had been jailed because they had fought for their nation's independence.

36. Venezuela recognized the Saharan Arab Democratic Republic and supported the self-determination of the

Saharawi people. It had concluded three cooperation agreements with that country relating to foreign affairs, finance, communication and information, and public policy, and would be concluding five others in the areas of health and education.

37. **Mr. Sangqu** (South Africa) observed that his own delegation would not be represented in the United Nations had it not been for the commendable efforts of the Special Committee on behalf of those who lived under colonial domination and foreign occupation. He expressed concern that in the last remaining colony on the African continent, the people of Western Sahara were still struggling for self-determination, an inalienable right consistently recognized by the General Assembly. The continuing occupation of Western Sahara by Morocco challenged the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and the authority and credibility of the Organization. South Africa endorsed the position of the African Union that the right of Western Sahara to self-determination and independence was not negotiable; it did not recognize Morocco's sovereignty over the Territory, and saw its presence there as a continued occupation. A United Nations-supervised referendum would give the Saharawi people the possibility of freely choosing their future status. His Government supported the Secretary-General's efforts to find a mutually acceptable political solution and urged the Government of Morocco and the Saharawi people as represented by the Frente Polisario to work with the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to resolve their differences and break the impasse. The round of negotiations launched in 2007 could produce positive results.

38. The Secretary-General should investigate the reports of human rights violations in Western Sahara and every effort should be made to restore the dignity of the Saharawi people. The United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) was crucial to the peace process.

39. *Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) resumed the Chair.*

40. **Mr. Benítez Verson** (Cuba) observed that decolonization must continue to be a United Nations priority. The Special Committee on Decolonization was doing serious work with the administering Powers, the representatives of the Non-Self-Governing Territories and Member States in fostering dialogue. Yet it was a matter of concern that some administering Powers were not cooperating with the Special Committee, in violation of their Charter obligations to do so.

41. The situation in the Turks and Caicos islands, where the administering Power had suspended parts of the constitution, was worrisome and it was urgent to re-establish the constitutional order there.

42. Despite the endorsement of the Special Committee in successive resolutions, the people of Puerto Rico, while defending their identity as a nation, had not yet been able to exercise their right to decide whether they wanted to be an independent and sovereign State. The Special Committee had expressly requested the General Assembly to consider the question of Puerto Rico in all its aspects, and the Member States of the Non-Aligned Movement maintained that the question of Puerto Rico was a colonial issue and that the United States had an obligation to accelerate the process of independence.

43. The people of Western Sahara also had a right to determine their own future. There had been four rounds of negotiations in the last few years between the two parties to the dispute under the auspices of the Secretary-General, and efforts to guarantee self-determination were ongoing.

44. Cuba fully supported the legitimate sovereignty of Argentina over the Malvinas Islands as part of that country's national territory. It called for a negotiated, just and final solution to that question.

45. Cuba had recently offered scholarships to 13 more students from Non-Self-Governing Territories, in addition to the more than 500 currently studying and receiving training in Cuba. Other Member States in a position to do so should also provide such facilities. In addition, the specialized agencies and international institutions associated with the United Nations could offer very beneficial assistance to the Territories. If all Member States worked together, colonialism could be a thing of the past.

46. **Mr. Badji** (Senegal) said that the United Nations had had some of its greatest successes in the area of decolonization, yet some situations remained unresolved. All Member States involved must allow the people of the Non-Self-Governing Territories to freely express their will.

47. The question of Western Sahara was of particular concern to Senegal, which shared a common history and enjoyed good relations with the Kingdom of Morocco. The painful situation in Western Sahara was satisfactory to neither of the parties directly concerned. Senegal firmly supported the Moroccan proposal to

grant broad autonomy to the Saharan region within the framework of the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Morocco. That realistic, reasonable proposal offered the best prospects for a political, final and mutually acceptable solution to the question of Western Sahara. Senegal was dedicated to strengthening the brotherly relations among all the countries of the Maghreb and of the African continent as a whole. It considered it imperative to discourage all forms of separatism and prevent any breakdown of the social fabric in the Maghreb.

48. His delegation thus supported the laudable initiatives of the Secretary-General and his Personal Envoy, who continued to hold in-depth consultations on the current positions of the parties and ways of moving into a more intensive phase of negotiation on substantive questions. Senegal hoped that the four rounds of negotiations begun under the auspices of the previous Personal Envoy of the Secretary-General would be carried forward in the form of direct talks.

49. Both parties had to show a spirit of compromise and enter into the negotiations in good faith so as not to lose the momentum towards a settlement in accordance with the Charter. It was necessary, as the Personal Envoy had argued, for the Security Council to become more involved and give clearer direction so as to ensure the stability, integration and development of the region and allow Saharawi refugees to live a normal life in their own land.

50. **Mr. Muburi-Muita** (Kenya) said that, at the close of the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism, collaborative efforts to decolonize the 16 remaining Non-Self-Governing Territories must be redoubled. The Special Committee, whose work Kenya unequivocally supported, must pursue genuine dialogue aimed at finding concrete and more creative ways of eradicating colonialism, and the administering Powers of the Territories must cooperate, facilitating United Nations missions to the Territories, regularly transmitting information on conditions there, promoting their advancement without depleting the resources that were their birthright, and helping them to conserve their cultural identity through restitution of cultural properties.

51. On the question of Western Sahara, Kenya supported the continuing negotiations under the auspices of the Secretary-General as the only path towards a just, lasting and mutually acceptable solution.

52. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia) deplored the fact that colonialism was still an issue with which the Committee was forced to deal; that was a serious indictment of United Nations resolve. Namibia called upon the administering Powers to speed up the process of granting independence and self-determination to the dependent Territories and urged the United Nations and especially the Fourth Committee to leave no stone unturned in its own efforts to end abhorrent foreign occupation.

53. Namibia was deeply concerned over the continuous occupation of Palestinian land. One had to question the value of so many General Assembly and Security Council resolutions if they could not be implemented. The people of Palestine must be guaranteed their inalienable rights to self-determination and statehood. Israel must cease all illegal activities, lift its unjust siege of the Gaza Strip, and instead promote peaceful negotiations based on those resolutions and the Quartet road map as the only viable option for a two-State solution. As to Western Sahara, his Government urged the United Nations to assume its full responsibility, and believed MINURSO should be strengthened so that it could monitor the ceasefire and any human rights violations. The United Nations plan for holding a free and fair referendum in the Territory should be immediately and unconditionally implemented. Namibia stood in solidarity with the peoples of those two Territories in their just quest for freedom, independence and social justice.

54. **Mr. Kleib** (Indonesia) said that, as a nation that had emerged from colonialism through a hard-fought struggle for independence, Indonesia would continue to work constructively to accelerate the process of decolonization within the framework of the United Nations. The right to self-determination and the respect for the territorial integrity of a Member State were fundamental to decolonization. Any subsequent course of action must build on the previous deliberations and decisions of the General Assembly.

55. Decolonization was first and foremost a political process. While progress in the economic and social fields was welcome, it did not obviate the need to reach a permanent political solution freely determined by the people in each Territory in accordance with United Nations principles.

56. The Special Committee had a central role in the decolonization process, and all Member States,

particularly the administering Powers which had not done so, and the agencies and institutions within the United Nations system, should lend their full support to its work. As the Second International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism drew to a close, the General Assembly should consider the launching of a third decade, equipped with a feasible, action-oriented and measurable plan of action.

57. **Mr. Santos** (Timor-Leste) said that his country, from the similar vantage point of a colonial past, had closely followed the question of Western Sahara for decades. Both countries had been colonized by Iberian Powers, had been identified by the United Nations as being ready for decolonization, and had been invaded by their immediate neighbours after the European withdrawal at around the same period, in 1975; both had been subjected to widespread human rights abuses and caught up in global political trends that were not of their making. A strong friendship and solidarity had grown between the Timorese people and the Saharawi people during the independence struggles, yet whereas Timor-Leste had achieved self-determination in 1999 under United Nations supervision, Western Sahara inexplicably had not yet done so.

58. As in his own country in the past, arguments were being put forward that Western Sahara was not economically viable. Colonizers always bent the truth to suit their political imperatives and the fact that they had the upper hand in resources, geopolitical power and foreign support further benefited them. Timor-Leste called for strict enforcement of the right of Saharawis to self-determination. There should be no illusion that peace would thrive on the basis of injustice.

59. His Government fully supported the efforts of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to find a just and acceptable solution to the long conflict, and it commended the Austrian Government for facilitating talks between representatives of the two parties to the conflict. It was, however, greatly concerned about the human rights abuses being committed against the Saharawi people in occupied Western Sahara. All parties must honour their commitment to human rights and abide by their obligations under international law.

60. **Mr. Rugunda** (Uganda) expressed concern that the process of decolonization had not yet been brought to a successful conclusion. The founding fathers of the African Union had made great efforts to decolonize

Africa and had achieved good results. Yet the question of Western Sahara remained unresolved, and it must be given the attention it deserved by all Member States. Only the Saharawi people could and should decide their own destiny, without conditions of any kind. It was encouraging that the parties to the conflict had reaffirmed their intention to continue the rounds of negotiations of the last few years under the auspices of the Secretary-General and had in fact presented separate proposals to the Secretary-General in 2007. He commended the efforts of the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy to work on the basis of Security Council resolution 1871 (2009) and earlier resolutions, welcomed the meetings being held to move the process of negotiation into a fifth round and urged both parties to work hard to overcome their differences in order to achieve a just, lasting and mutually acceptable political solution that would enable the people of Western Sahara to exercise their right to self-determination.

61. At the same time, Uganda was concerned over the reported violations of human rights in Western Sahara, but was reassured that the Secretary-General had affirmed the United Nations commitment to upholding international human rights standards there. There had been reports for some time of the illegal exploitation of the resources of Western Sahara, and that too must be addressed.

Rights of reply

62. **Mr. Parham** (United Kingdom), speaking in exercise of the right of reply to statements made by the delegations of Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, Uruguay and Venezuela (the Bolivarian Republic of) regarding the issue of sovereignty over the Falkland Islands, reiterated his Government's well-known position that the United Kingdom had no doubts about its sovereignty over the Territory and that there could be no negotiations on sovereignty unless and until the Islanders themselves so wished.

63. In reply to the statement by the representatives of Saint Kitts and Nevis and Cuba regarding the suspension of the Territorial government of the Turks and Caicos Islands, he reiterated that the British Government had carefully weighed that constitutional measure, that the suspension was intended to allow the Governor to restore good governance, sustainable development and sound financial management, and that the plan was to hold elections in July 2011, if not sooner.

64. **Mr. Díaz Bartolomé** (Argentina) said, in response to remarks made by the United Kingdom delegation, that his Government considered the Malvinas Islands, South Georgia Islands and South Sandwich Islands and their surrounding maritime areas an integral part of the territory of Argentina. Because they had been illegally occupied by the United Kingdom, they were the subject of a sovereignty dispute between the two countries. Various international organizations and the General Assembly in a number of resolutions had recognized the disputed sovereignty — as had the Special Committee and the Organization of American States — and the two Governments had been urged to resume negotiations to settle the dispute.

Requests for hearings

65. **The Chairperson** drew attention to 95 requests for hearings under agenda item 39, relating to Gibraltar (A/C.4/64/2), Guam (A/C.4/64/3 and Add.1-7), the United States Virgin Islands (A/C.4/64/4 and Add.1), Western Sahara (A/C.4/64/5 and Add.1-83), and New Caledonia (A/C.4/64/6). He took it that the Committee wished to grant those requests.

66. *It was so decided.*

The meeting rose at 5.50 p.m.